

Board of Selectmen & Finance Committee Joint Meeting
November 20, 2013
Minutes

Board of Selectmen Members present: Jeanne Pryor, Angela Hilton, William Elovirta

Finance Committee Members present: Maria Wallington, Ann Spadafora, Stephen LaBelle, Jeremy Dunn, Dan Parnell

Others Present: Ed Gibson, Nina Weiler, Mark Karlberg, Robert Ronzio, Colleen O'Connor, John Les, Dr. William Cameron, Melissa Falkowski, Chris Bouchard

7:01 PM Jeanne called the meeting to order. She advised that the meeting is being held in accordance with the Open Meeting Law and Guidelines for Board of Selectmen Meetings.

Jeanne asked if anyone was recording the meeting. No one other than the Board of Selectmen is recording the meeting.

Steve LaBelle called the Finance Committee meeting to order.

The Central Berkshire Regional School District Administration met with the Board and Finance Committee to discuss planning for the FY 2015 budget. Dr. Cameron, School Superintendent, advised that since he has been the superintendent, he has tried to meet with all of the district towns to see what their concerns and interests were for the upcoming fiscal year before the budget process started. He also stated that he was here to answer any questions the boards may have or the general public may have. He advised that the school committee has set up a budget schedule and the school committee has asked for his preliminary budget by January 9, 2014 and his final budget by the middle of March. He asked the Boards if they had any questions. Jeanne's biggest concern was the assessment issue. Dr. Cameron advised that based on the information the school district had when they put its budget together was different from the final state budget. The governor changed how the towns that belonged to school districts were assessed. Chapter 71, section 16 states that the assessments that are voted on at the annual town meetings for all of the towns in the district cannot be changed unless a majority of the towns in the district vote to accept the changes including the towns whose assessments would be going up. This did not happen so the original assessments stayed the same. He was not sure how this could be changed so that this does not happen again. He advised that there is a proposal that the legislature has made that would require the legislature to vote early in the budget process on school budgets so only the school's budget would not change once the final budget was approved. This might help but it is only a proposal and has not been enacted. Bill asked if the formula for the towns in the school district changed. Melissa Falkowski, the CBRSD Business Administrator, explained that the formula did not change, but it had to do with the target contributions. Some towns are below its target contributions and some are above its target contributions. The legislature is trying to get every town to be at its proper target contribution. She explained how the target contributions are assessed that is based partly on real estate valuation and the growth factor. Jeremy asked Dr. Cameron if he could give an estimate of how much the school budget might increase so the town could start preparing its budget. Dr. Cameron did not have all of the information but gave some examples of what the school would be looking to improve and the approximate costs for these items. He did advise that they are working very hard to keep the budget from increasing too much because they know that the school district's enrollment is dropping like most districts in Berkshire County and the towns are struggling with their own budgets. Ed asked Dr. Cameron what the projected enrollment for CBRSD and for Becket Washington School would be. He did not think there would be a big drop for the whole district and for

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Becket Washington School. Ed also asked him if the school received grant funding for security systems for the schools. Dr. Cameron advised that CBRSD did not receive grant funding for this but all of the towns in the district voted to incur cost for district wide building security improvements so they are moving ahead with this. Briefly discussed autism programs at the school. Dr. Cameron advised that the district does not currently have any students in the autism spectrum going to schools outside the district and that they are continually striving to improve the autism program. John Les, one of Becket's representatives on the school committee, advised that since Mike Falk resigned from the school committee, they are still looking for his replacement. No one has come forward as of yet but he would like the Selectmen to see if they could find someone to fill this vacancy. Jeanne thanked everyone for coming to this meeting.

7:40 PM Maria Wallington motioned to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting, Ann Spadafora seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Jeanne opened the Tax Classification Hearing. David Zagorski, Principal Assessor, explained that each year the Board of Selectmen must vote whether to have a single tax rate or have multiple tax rates for the different classes of property. Last year the Board of Selectmen adopted a single tax rate for all classes of property. After a public hearing, the Board of Selectmen must determine the following: 1. The allocation of the tax levy against the property classes for FY2014, 2. A tax burden shift from the open space class to the residential class, 3. The granting of a residential exemption of up to 10% of the average value of all owner-occupied properties. 4. The granting of a commercial exemption of up to 10% to certain small commercial properties. He gave the Selectmen the Assessors recommendations and explained each one. The Assessors recommend a single tax rate and do not recommend an Open Space Discount and do not recommend a Residential Exemption and do not recommend a Small Commercial Exemption. Ed recommends that the Selectmen do not vote on the single tax rate tonight because we should be receiving our preliminary certification on Friday and when we complete the triennial valuation, there needs to be a public disclosure period which will end about the time of the first Selectmen's meeting in December. He recommends that the Selectmen vote on the last three items but continue the allocation of the tax levy until the December 4th meeting. Jeanne motioned to continue Item #1 to December 4th, Angela seconded. All in favor. Bill motioned adopt the Assessors recommendation of a no vote for an open space discount and a no vote on a residential exemption and a no vote on a small commercial exemption, Angela seconded. All in favor. David advised that he would have the LA-5 form for the Board to sign at the meeting on December 4th. Bill asked David to try to get the information to the Board of Selectmen earlier next year so they can digest it before the hearing. Ed would like David to extend an invitation to the other Assessors for the meeting on December 4th.

Chris Bouchard explained that if the Board votes to close the roads that are not maintained during the winter it removes the town's responsibility of having to pull people out when they choose to drive on the roads and get stuck. It saves the town money if they do not maintain parts of these roads where there are no houses. The highway department puts up signs to alert people that the roads are not maintained. Bill motioned that the Highway Department be allowed to close Bonny Rigg Hill Road from House #982 to Otis Town line; Corey Road from Captain Whitney Road to end; George Carter Road from house #1304 to Jacobs Ladder Road (Rte. 20); Johnson Road from house #733 to Otis Town line; Plumb Road from house #677 to house #398 (middle narrow section); Tyne Road from house #679 to Fred Snow Road; Tyringham Road from house #358 to Tyringham Town line, Angela seconded. All in favor. The roads will not be maintained from December 4, 2013 to May 1, 2014.

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Bill motioned to approve the Board of Selectmen minutes of November 6, 2013, Angela seconded. All in favor. Bill motioned to approve the Board of Selectmen minutes of November 13, 2013, Angela seconded. All in favor.

Bill motioned to exempt the following positions from distribution of summaries and the mandatory training and education requirements as allowed under the Ethics Reform Law Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2009: Poll (Election) Workers, Senior Tax Abatement Work off Participants, Lifeguards, Summer Park's Director, Summer Park's Program Assistant, Volunteer Firefighters (Fire Chief is not Exempted) and the Council on Aging, Angela seconded. Jeanne motioned to amend the original motion to not exempt the Council on Aging Director, Bill seconded. All in favor. Jeanne motioned to accept the motion as amended, Bill seconded. All in favor.

The Board reviewed letters of interest for the Zoning Board of Appeals. There is one vacancy for a regular member and two vacancies for associate members. Jeanne recommends that the Board appoint the two associate members and then confer with the ZBA about the regular member. Bill asked Bob Ronzio if the Planning Board turns someone down for a permit wouldn't the applicant go to the ZBA to try to have it overturned. Mr. Ronzio advised that the Zoning Bylaws were rewritten so that if the Planning Board turned down a permit, the applicant would need to take the Planning Board to court so it would not conflict with the ZBA. Bill asked if Mark Karlberg could be objective while serving the ZBA if his wife was also on the ZBA. Mr. Karlberg advised that he and his wife disagree on things now so it should not be a problem. He feels the only problem would be if something came up that would involve both of them then they would both need to recuse themselves. Bill motioned to appoint Al Blake to the Zoning Board of Appeals as an associate member, Angela seconded. All in favor. Jeanne motioned to appoint George Roberts to the Zoning Board of Appeals as an associate member, Bill seconded. All in favor. Jeanne would like to send the ZBA a letter asking them if they have a recommendation for the full member.

The Board reviewed the Special Permit Application for the installation of antenna panels and six remote radio heads on the existing telecommunications tower and erecting 12'x30' equipment shed within the existing fenced-in compound at 60 Cross Road/Wade Inn Road. Bill motioned that the Board of Selectmen have no objection to the Special Permit Application from Pittsfield Cellular Telephone Company d/b/a Verizon Wireless for property located at 60 Cross Road/Wade Inn Road, Angela seconded. All in favor.

The Board reviewed the monthly reports of the Building Inspector, Police Department and Citations Issued. Bill asked about the YMCA permit on the building inspector report. There was no permit fee for this permit and he wanted to know why there wasn't one. Ed will check with the building inspector about this. Jeanne thanked the police chief for his narrative report. Briefly discussed getting monthly reports from the fire department and the highway department. Jeanne motioned to ask the fire department for a monthly report, Angela seconded. All in favor. Jeanne motioned that the highway department do a monthly report, Angela seconded. All in favor.

Board of Selectmen's Comments and Announcements: None.

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Town Administrator's Report: Ed advised that he, Kris McDonough and Chris Bouchard attended different sessions over the past week for training on the MIIA WebEOC system. This training will come in handy in the future as all information relating to natural disasters will be filed by each department of a community through this system and that information will be what is utilized to declare disasters on a local, state and national level and also to compile the paperwork used to file expense reimbursement expenses with the Federal Government or the State.

Ed advised that David has repainted the lines in the town hall parking lot. He also arranged for the Pittsfield Overhead Door Company to come out to the Ambulance Garage where they replaced the garage door bottom and repaired the safety features to the overhead door opener and a window in the overhead door as well as having them assess the issues with both the Fire Department overhead doors and having them repaired. These units are now over thirty years old and are increasingly difficult to find repair parts available. David also adjusted the weather stripping around the Ambulance Department overhead door so that the door would fit flush against the track and wall. He will be gathering information on the cost of replacing these two units and they will be replaced through funding in a future budget request. He has been getting the town hall ready for the winter months along with numerous plumbing repairs and tree removal. Ed advised that a new door opener has been ordered to replace one that was no longer working in the Community Room.

Ed advised that David Zagorski has been informed that we would probably have our Preliminary Certification for real estate revaluation from the State this Friday, November 22nd.

Ed advised that Chris Bouchard has informed him that adding the solar lit option to a road sign is approximately \$900.00.

Ed advised that Melanson and Heath are wrapping up our FY12 yearend audit and he is expecting that we should have our Financial Statement "Draft" from them in the next few weeks.

Ed advised that he would be attending the Energy Committee meeting tomorrow morning and Jim Barry the Regional Director for Green Communities will be coming tomorrow afternoon to review and train him on how to file the yearend report for the Green Communities designation. He will also be attending a JLMC Mediation session in Lee on Friday morning. He also took part in a web based MIIA training last week for their new Agility Program, which gives communities who utilize MIIA insurance the ability to order disaster recovery equipment and services through a centralized company who is a MIIA business partner in the aftermath of a disaster whether it is a small localized event or a broader severe natural disaster.

Ed advised that he attended a lock-down training event at the Becket Washington School the other day. He also advised that Marc Portieri was there representing the Becket Police Department, Ray Tarjick was there representing the Becket Fire Department and there was also a state trooper there to evaluate how the event went. The event was improved from the last time they did a lock-down at the school. Ed advised that they will do an emergency evacuation at the school next week.

Public Input: Ann Spadafora advised that she was driving down Fred Snow Road one night when it was extremely foggy and could not see the intersection ahead sign and before she knew it she almost shot out

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onto Route 20 with oncoming traffic coming from both directions. She is requesting that a Stop sign be placed at the end of the road. The Board asked her to put this request in writing. Chris Bouchard advised that this request would have to go to Mass Highway since the sign would be placed on state property.

Colleen O'Connor asked that the minutes of October 16th have the word "alleged" inserted where they discussed the damage to the school's septic system.

Colleen O'Connor expressed her concern about having a Conservation Commission member who is also a Board of Health member. She also expressed her concern about a house that was sold on Greenwater Pond because of the well location and the septic location. Jeanne asked her if she was going to the Board of Health with these concerns. She advised that she would try to attend the next BOH meeting.

Any other business: The Board approved the notice that will appear in the Country Journal and on the website about the signage changes at the Yokum Pond Road/County Road intersection with a minor change.

Ed advised that Nina had a request from the Becket Athenaeum to post their "Holiday Gala" on the town's website and when he looked at the poster some red flags went up. The first thing was the "music and dancing" because they would need to apply for a "Music and Entertainment" license. The next item was the "BYOB". Ed was not sure if the Town of Becket was a "BYOB" community or not. Ed spoke with the Becket Athenaeum and they will be attending the meeting on December 4th. He is recommending that the Selectmen allow the BYOB this time because of the time constraints but to let them know they cannot do this again.

Jeanne advised that she has made some changes to the "Draft" Medical Marijuana Treatment Center Bylaw that was reviewed at a Planning Board Meeting. She advised that she added definitions and described the other changes she made to this draft bylaw. The Selectmen agreed to submit these revisions to the Planning Board. Jeanne will email the draft bylaw to Bob Ronzio and he will make sure everyone on the Planning Board will get a copy.

Jeanne motioned to accept the Appointment Application, Bill seconded. All in favor.

Jeanne advised that there is a bill that is proposed regarding early voting that she was concerned about. If this bill passes there would be a considerable cost for the cities and towns to provide polling places and paying election workers, etc. She thought the Finance Committee should be aware of this too.

Jeanne asked if we heard anything from Pat Mullins regarding the Affordable Senior Housing. Ed advised that he has not heard from her at all.

Reviewed correspondence.

9:05 PM Angela motioned to adjourn, Bill seconded. All in favor.

Reviewed payroll/expense warrants.

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Respectfully submitted,
Nina Weiler, Secretary


Jeanne W. Pryor, Chairman

Documents discussed at meeting:

- Tax Classification Hearing Information
- Winter 2013/2014 Road Closures
- Letters of interest for the Zoning Board of Appeals
- Special Permit Application from Pittsfield Cellular Telephone Company d/b/a Verizon Wireless
- Monthly reports of the Building Inspector, Police Department and Citations Issued
- Appointment Application
- "Draft" Medical Marijuana Treatment Center Bylaw